

1 **WHAT IS CLAIMED IS:**

2 1. A method of polling interactive television viewers, the method comprising:
3 preparing a set of polling requests that each ask an interactive television viewer to
4 select an element from a group of two or more elements;
5 connecting to one or more set top systems of one or more interactive television
6 viewers;
7 sending the set of polling requests to the one or more set top systems of the one or
8 more interactive television viewers;
9 receiving responses to the set of polling requests from one or more interactive
10 television viewers;
11 evaluating the responses to the set of polling requests; and
12 preparing a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the
13 evaluation of the responses to the set of polling requests.

1 2. The method of claim 1 wherein two polling requests have two different sets of
2 elements.

1 3. The method of claim 1 wherein each element appearing in the set of polling
2 requests is different from the every other element appearing in the set of polling requests.

1 4. The method of claim 1 wherein evaluating the responses includes tallying the
2 responses that have been received after a time limit.

1 5. The method of claim 4 wherein the time limit is applied relative to a period that
2 begins when the polling request is initially displayed to an interactive television viewer.

1 6. The method of claim 4 wherein the time limit is common to all of the interactive
2 television viewers.

1 7. The method of claim 1 further comprising displaying particular content to the
2 interactive television viewers based on evaluating the responses.

1 8. The method of claim 7 wherein the particular content includes a graphical user
2 interface.

1 9. The method of claim 7 wherein the particular content includes multimedia data.

1 10. The method of claim 7 wherein displaying particular content to the interactive
2 television viewer comprises displaying the particular content using the set top system.

1 11. The method of claim 1 further comprising designating polling rules for targeting
2 the interactive television viewers.

1 12. The method of claim 11 further comprising determining context information of
2 interactive television viewers.

1 13. The method of claim 12 further comprising applying the targeting rules to the
2 context information to identify targeted interactive television viewers.

1 14. The method of claim 12 wherein determining the context information includes
2 determining television programming being viewed by an interactive television viewer at a
3 particular time.

1 15. The method of claim 14 wherein determining television programming being
2 viewed comprises determining the television programming tuned to by a set top box.

1 16. The method of claim 14 wherein determining television programming being
2 viewed comprises determining the television programming using an EPG.

1 17. The method of claim 1 further comprising determining context information
2 associated with television programming available for delivery to the interactive television
3 viewer.

1 18. The method of claim 17 wherein determining the context information associated
2 with the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a
3 television signal received by a set top box.

1 19. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a channel
3 identification number.

1 20. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a
3 broadcaster identifier.

1 21. The method of 17 wherein preparing a set of polling requests includes preparing
2 the polling requests based on context information associated with the television
3 programming.

1 22. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a
3 television series.

1 23. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon an
3 episode of a television show.

1 24. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon an EPG
3 identity.

1 25. The method of claim 17 wherein determining context information associated with
2 the television programming comprises determining context information based upon a
3 program content category.

1 26. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes
2 prompting the interactive television viewer to select one element in the polling request of two
3 or more elements.

1 27. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes
2 prompting an interactive television viewer to rank order a list of elements.

1 28. The method of claim 1 wherein determining two or more elements in the new
2 polling request includes a most selected element in a first polling request and a most selected
3 element in a second polling request.

1 29. The method of claim 28 wherein the set of polling requests continues until there
2 is one element that has not been selected to a lesser degree than other elements in any polling
3 request of the most selected elements and the other elements.

1 30. The method of claim 1 wherein evaluating the responses includes determining
2 which element in the polling request received the most votes.

1 31. The method of claim 1 wherein determining two or more elements in the new
2 polling request includes a least selected element in a first polling request and a least selected
3 element in a second polling request.

1 32. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes
2 sending an instant message.

1 33. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes
2 sending an electronic mail message.

1 34. The method of claim 1 wherein sending the set of polling requests includes
2 sending a display to overlay television programming.

1 35. A method of participating in an interactive television poll, the method
2 comprising:

3 connecting to a host;
4 receiving a set of polling requests;
5 completing the polling requests;
6 transmitting the responses to the polling requests; and
7 receiving a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the
8 responses of one or more interactive television viewers to the set of polling requests.

1 36. A communications apparatus being for polling interactive television viewers, the
2 apparatus configured to:

3 prepare a set of polling requests that each ask an interactive television viewer to select
4 an element from a group of two or more elements;
5 connect to one or more set top systems of one or more interactive television viewers;

6 send the set of polling requests to the one or more set top systems of the one or more
7 interactive television viewers;
8 receive responses to the set of polling requests from one or more interactive television
9 viewers;
10 evaluate the responses to the set of polling requests; and
11 prepare a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the
12 evaluation of the responses to the set of polling requests.

1 37. A communications apparatus for participating in interactive television polling,
2 the apparatus being configured to:

3 connect to a host;
4 receive a set of polling requests;
5 complete the polling requests;
6 transmit the responses to the set of polling requests; and
7 receive a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the
8 responses of one or more interactive television viewers to the set of polling requests.

1 38. A computer program for polling interactive television viewers, the computer
2 program being stored on a computer readable medium and comprising instructions for
3 causing a computer to:

4 prepare a set of polling requests that each ask an interactive television viewer to select
5 an element from a group of two or more elements;
6 connect to one or more set top systems of one or more interactive television viewers;
7 send the set of polling requests to the one or more set top systems of the one or more
8 interactive television viewers;
9 receive responses to the set of polling requests from one or more interactive television
10 viewers;
11 evaluate the responses to the set of polling requests; and
12 prepare a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the
13 evaluation of the responses to the set of polling requests.

1 39. A computer program for participating in interactive television polling, the
2 computer program being stored on a computer readable medium and comprising instructions
3 for causing a computer to:
4 connect to a host;
5 receive a set of polling requests;
6 complete the polling requests;
7 transmit the responses to the polling requests; and
8 receive a new polling request including two or more elements selected based on the
9 responses of one or more interactive television viewers to the set of polling requests.